

## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 40

By Fraley

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Bob Willis on being selected the 2006 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year.

WHEREAS, it is the great privilege of this General Assembly to honor and commend those individuals who, through their laudable endeavors in the agriculture industry, have established themselves as exemplary leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, Bob Willis of Hillsboro, Tennessee is one such estimable individual, having recently been named the 2006 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Willis is only the second Tennessee farmer to receive this honor, which is awarded annually by a panel of judges, standing in competition with eight other state finalists from the Southeastern states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia; and

WHEREAS, proclaimed the winner on October 17, 2006, at the Willie B. Withers Expo Luncheon during the opening day of the 29<sup>th</sup> annual Sunbelt Expo, Bob Willis was joined by members of his family, friends from Coffee County, Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture Ken Givens, staff from University of Tennessee Extension, and members of the Tennessee Farm Bureau board of directors; and

WHEREAS, as the 2006 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year, Bob Willis received a \$14,000 cash award from Swisher International, a tractor of his choice for one year from Massey Ferguson North America, a \$1,000 gift certificate from Southern States, a \$500 cash award, a \$500 gift certificate and a custom designed jacket from Williamson-Dickie Company, and a \$3,600 custom-designed gun safe from Misty Morn Safe Company; and

WHEREAS, the youngest of ten children, Bob Willis dreamed of being a farmer at an early age, ultimately fulfilling his dream to own a farm in 1961, when he purchased 145 acres and planted his first crop – sweet potatoes; and

WHEREAS, today, after years of hard work, toil, and dedication, Mr. Willis owns a farm operation that covers over 4,500 acres with 1,375 acres of corn, 75 acres of silage corn, 1,200 acres of soybeans, 480 acres of double-cropped soybeans, 480 acres of wheat, 10 acres of Alfalfa hay, 200 acres for grass clippings, and 43 acres of wheat hay; and

WHEREAS, branching out into livestock, Mr. Willis also owns a cattle operation that includes 850 head of Holstein heifers and 130 head of beef cows; and

WHEREAS, a humble and gracious gentleman, Bob Willis has said his receipt of this outstanding award is a tribute to those who stood by him and encouraged him over the years with their wonderful help and support; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Willis has also had to overcome two major personal adversities during his life, the tragic loss of his first wife, Vivian, and the death of his youngest son John in a farming accident in 2000; and

WHEREAS, his many accomplishments aside, Bob Willis is most grateful for the love and companionship he shares with his wife, Carol, and is the proud parent of son Don, who works on the farm; daughter Kathy, who works at Duke University; step-daughter Wendy, a high school teacher; and step-son Michael, who is in gravel production; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we should pause in our deliberations to honor Mr. Willis for his outstanding agricultural achievements; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Bob Willis on being selected as the Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year for 2006, salute his commitment to agriculture, and extend to him our best wishes for every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.